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# CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

November 2, 2020

## The Cloud of Witnesses

Grace to you and peace! The celebration of All Saints Day has always been special to me. When I served as pastor in a local church, I always found myself imagining the “Cloud of Witnesses” on All Saints Day – surrounding the sanctuary as though they were in a balcony, emitting their energy and filling the sanctuary with hope and conviction. These witnesses were mostly people I did not know - from different countries and races, different times, some showing marks of their physical sacrifices in life. They were all there as a reminder that the church is constantly moving onward having been strengthened and blessed by those who had come before.



As we approach election day, I find myself drawn to that image of the Cloud of Witnesses that remind me that our country and our world have been through other painful times in the past – facing brutality, divisions, wars, inhumane treatment of others, etc. But God’s spirit has always continued to be in the midst of the world. In a recent webinar talking about the election, the Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister, made a statement, “Whoever wins, wins - and the day after we still need to be the church.”

We are surrounded by a Cloud of Witnesses that attest to that! As others before us, being the church means being the constant witness to God’s love and justice: not giving up and not assuming that any particular elected official has the power to change everything. We all have a constant role to play in helping to create a just world for all.

I invite you to join with me in showing patience through this election –

however long it takes to know the actual results and pray for God's guidance to show us how to best be the church no matter what the results.

Blessings, Char

## News from the Conference Office

### Conference Minister Search Committee Named

The Conference Board of Directors is pleased to announce the members of the Conference Minister Search Committee. Ms. Bea Forniss has agreed to chair the Search Committee. Ms. Forniss is the Moderator of First Congregational Christian UCC, Montgomery, AL and brings with her organizational skills as well as Southeast Conference experience. Other members of the Committee are as follows: Ms. Penny Hensley (Board Representative; Phoenix Congregational Christian Church, Wildersville, TN), Mr. J Mason Davis III (First Congregational, Birmingham, AL), Pastor Haley Lerner (Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta GA), Rev. Tricia Lytle (Peace Congregational, Clemson, SC), Rev. Steven Miller (Virginia Highland Church, Atlanta, GA), Rev. Troy Sanders (Rehoboth Fellowship, Atlanta GA), Rev. Diane Tugel (Brookmeade Congregational, Nashville), Ms. Dana Williams (Unity UCC, Montgomery, AL). Please keep them in prayer as they begin their work on your behalf.

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### How can the Southeast Conference respond to the issue of racism?

We are seeking interested persons to form a team to suggest ways that the Conference can strengthen our witness to address issues of racism. Many of our local churches have engaged in conversations about racism and white privilege. Many individuals have participated in activities in support of and encouraging diversity and inclusion. But what about the entity that we call the Southeast Conference? You may have noticed that the national UCC Board recently [shared a document](#) seeking to do a national assessment of the UCC's diversity, equity, and inclusion. The UCC Conference Ministers recently wrote a letter in support of this assessment and committing themselves to be part of the reflection, [posted here on our website](#). So what about the Southeast Conference? If you are interested in being part of a new Team to explore the possibilities, please contact Char Burch, [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org).

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## Let's Talk About Church Bylaws

**Tuesday, November 9 – 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

Join UCC Attorney, Heather Kimmel, for a conversation about local church bylaws – what to make sure to include and clarify. This is for both clergy and lay leaders and is a great opportunity to look at your bylaws! If you already have some questions, email them to Char Burch at [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org) and she will pass them onto the attorney prior to the meeting so that they will be included in the discussion. [REGISTER](#)

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## Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

**Monday, November 16, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**

As things keep changing regarding COVID-19 and reopening churches, we want to continue the conversation, developing safe and best practices. There is also the question about what churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. [REGISTER](#)

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## Clergy Zoom Connections for November

- **Responding to the Election**

Thursday, Nov. 5 – 4 pm Eastern/3 pm Central

No matter what the results of the election or if the results are yet determined, clergy will need to provide spiritual leadership. This is an opportunity to reflect together on how we might respond.

Zoom: [REGISTER](#)

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesdays, November 3, 10, 17, 24 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**

Thursday, November 19 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)

20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at [HeartSongJean@gmail.com](mailto:HeartSongJean@gmail.com).)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>

- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**

Tuesday, December 1, 2020 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>

- **From Lament to Hope**

December 1 - 6 pm Eastern/5 pm Central – Save the Date and Time

The approach of Advent and Christmas, stress and weariness will increase for both local church pastors and specialized ministers.

Come and join your colleagues for a time of quiet and spiritual nurture. More details to follow.



## **Prayer List**

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of November 1

- Howard Congregational UCC; Nashville, Tennessee
- Kathy Clark
- Dahron Johnson
- Ann Schoup
- Heather Fosburgh
- Dahron Johnson
- Marvin Morgan

### Week of November 8

- Covenant Community Church; Center Point, Alabama

- Lawrence Clark
- James Johnson
- Bruce Schoup
- Jan Whiteman
- leea allen
- Brian Byrne

## Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN

## News from the Wider Church

### The Urgent Work of Racial Justice and Equity

#### Reset for Renewal - Youth Ministry Nov. 12-14 event

Join a virtual gathering for youth ministry leaders to foster relationships, reclaim their resilience and gifts for ministry and reconnect with the pulse of young people in the midst of today's world through nationally recognized plenary speakers, workshops, worship, spiritual direction and other offerings. Reset for Renewal is designed for individuals who are working with youth and young adult ministries in any of the following ways: Conference level, Outdoor Ministries Association or Education/Campus Ministry settings of the United Church of Christ (and beyond) and local churches. For schedule and registration go to: [www.ucc.org/youth](http://www.ucc.org/youth)

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### Officiating Weddings Remotely

This word from Heather Kimmel, UCC General Counselor – "After some research into one state's law, I recommended that clergy not do officiate weddings remotely because of a "presence" requirement for a solemnizing officiant. While there are a few states that have issued COVID-era exceptions to officiants solemnizing marriages in person, it is only a few. And so I would encourage any clergy person who is considering doing this to proceed with extreme caution and consult a domestic relations attorney for a legal opinion in their state. The risk is that the couple's marriage could be invalid, and also that the clergy person may be charged with a likely

misdemeanor level offense for officiating an invalid marriage."

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## Virtual Worship Service Option for Local Churches

The Council of Conference Ministers has created their second virtual worship service! The service will be ready for use on Sunday, November 15th in full and in parts, but can be used at any time. It is centered around the Parable of the Talents. More information to come!

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## Free Advent Resources from 3 Great Loves

The UCC's 3 Great Loves initiative is providing some Advent graphics and images for various social media platforms. This includes some thoughtful videos that can be inserted into online worship. It is being distributed through UCC Resources by [free download here](#).

## Trainings and Conferences

## Red Cross Offers Free Virtual Services

The Red Cross has established a program to support individuals who have lost a loved one due to the ongoing pandemic and frontline workers. There is a virtual team of Red Cross volunteers specializing in the areas of mental health, spiritual care and health services who are ready to provide access to

resources such as grief counseling, legal resources, funeral information, financial information services or veterans' assistance. Go to [www.redcross.org/VFAC](http://www.redcross.org/VFAC) for more information.

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**UCC Mental Health Network**

Welcoming • Inclusive • Supportive • Engaged

## WISE Training for Congregations

The UCC Mental Health Network, in partnership with the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, will sponsor a WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) training for congregations that is open to churches throughout the UCC. The training will take place on November 13-14, The cost is \$25. Check the following for more information: [bit.ly/IKCWISE](https://bit.ly/IKCWISE)

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## Recognizing Mental Health Issues During the Pandemic – Recording available

If you missed the October discussion with our three panelists: Rev. Anita Hauenstein - Licensed Psychologist and "spiritual psychologist" who maintains a Private Practice in Nashville, TN; Rev. Dr. Bryan Jones, Licensed Professional Counselor and Mental Health Staff Chaplain for the Atlanta Veterans Administration Healthcare System; and Phyllis Mark, Psy.D., Licensed, Clinical Psychologist in Birmingham, AL. The recording is available at [www.seucc.org/youtube](http://www.seucc.org/youtube).

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## Energizing the South – Recordings Available

Supported by a UCC Grant from the Brown Endowment for Clergy Continuing Education, the People's Council of Alabama Interfaith Power and Light presented a very informative 2-day seminar on Energizing the South for Energy Justice. Over 20 speakers shared information and experiences. Thank you to Rev. Michael Malcom and Mr. Kyle Crider for organizing the event. Recording of the seminar can be accessed [at this link](#).

# Conference Calendar

## Clergy Conversations via Zoom

November 3 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

## Responding to the Election

November 5 @ 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm EST

## Healthy Boundaries 101

November 7 @ 8:45 am - 12:15 pm EST

## Discussion about Church Bylaws

November 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

## Clergy Conversations via Zoom

November 10 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

## Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

November 16 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

## Clergy Conversations via Zoom

November 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

## Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** [cchurch@secucc.org](mailto:cchurch@secucc.org)

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